

Introduction

Since pre-settlement days some 200 years ago, Indiana has lost approximately 85% of its wetlands. Because wetlands are valuable natural resources that contribute considerably (although often silently) to our quality of life, the Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan (IWCP) was developed to conserve Indiana's remaining wetlands.

The IWCP is a statewide plan coordinated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. One of the six strategic components of the plan is education—"targeted efforts for technical staff, people who own/work the land, school children, and other audiences." The Outreach Handbook has been developed as part of this education component.

The Handbook is a compilation of existing information and materials regarding wetlands. It is intended for use by technical staff, landowners, teachers, and anyone else who is interested in sharing information about the benefits of wetlands conservation in Indiana.

Materials in this Handbook are intended to be master copies that can be duplicated and distributed as handouts, overhead projector transparencies, or posters that people can use in presentations, workshops, and classrooms.

Outreach Guide Contents

Information Sources Tab 1

This section contains contact information for some of the many sources that can help Hoosiers obtain materials on Indiana's wetlands and wetlands in general. These sources include state and federal agencies, local entities, websites, and various lists of private groups or individuals involved with wetlands issues.

Wetland Basics and More Tab 2

This section provides basic information on wetlands, such as definitions of wetlands (and why there is more than one definition), wetland functions and values (and what the difference is between a function and a value), an overview of how federal and state agencies protect/manage/regulate our wetlands, and some specific information on Indiana's wetlands.

Handouts/Miscellaneous Tab 3

This section contains various stand-alone items that can be copied and distributed to others involved in wetlands conservation, or for outreach purposes.

Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan

Implementation Project Update

December 1998

Background

In June 1996, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) published the *Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan* (IWCP). The IWCP was developed through an extensive process of information gathering, input, and review by a variety of interests across the state. Development was guided by three groups: the Wetlands Advisory Group (people representing diverse stakeholders in Indiana wetlands conservation—from environmentalists to county surveyors; from farmers to coal mine operators), the Technical Advisory Team (technical representatives from the state and federal agencies that have regulatory or oversight roles in wetlands conservation), and the Project Reviewers (a group of several hundred stakeholders that were solicited for input on the *IWCP* by telephone and through the mail throughout the planning process). Overall, more than 900 individuals across Indiana participated in the Plan's development.

The purpose of the *IWCP* was to achieve wetlands conservation in ways that improve the quality of life in Indiana. The Plan establishes common ground on which progress in wetlands conservation can be made, and proposes specific actions designed to achieve that progress.

Implementation of the IWCP

In April 1997, the DNR received a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to fund implementation of the following specific actions that are identified in the Plan:

- **Continue the coordination and facilitation of the Wetlands Advisory Group (WAG) and Technical Advisory Team (TAT)**
- **Select and establish a Pilot Focus Area and develop a "model" for implementing comprehensive wetland conservation measures through local partnerships**
- **Initiate the development of a Wetland Assessment Method for evaluation and prioritization of wetlands**
- **Improve the accessibility of existing wetlands information by developing outreach efforts**

Implementation Project Tasks that have been Completed

Following are specific tasks that have been completed for each of the above actions through the work of the Technical Advisory Team, Wetlands Advisory Group, Project Reviewers, and project facilitators.

- **Continue the coordination and facilitation of the Wetlands Advisory Group (WAG) and Technical Advisory Team (TAT)**

To date, the WAG has met four times (7/97, 10/97, 3/98, 5/98) during the implementation phase of the IWCP project. The TAT has met ten times (5/5/97, 5/28/97, 9/97, 10/97, 2/98, 3/98, 4/98, 5/98, 6/98, 10/98). The meetings have had tremendous benefit for Indiana wetland conservation by providing a forum for creating working relationships and facilitating exchange of information between and among the agencies and stakeholders that have an interest in wetlands issues. Through the meetings, the TAT and WAG have guided the progress of the IWCP implementation. In addition, they completed the following achievements not specifically required by the IWCP implementation contract:

- ▶ Impacts Assessment Committee - This committee was formed to address the issue of impacts (positive and negative) that wetlands have on surrounding land values, etc. The committee is developing a Fact Sheet on the relationship between mosquitoes and wetlands for distribution to planners, municipalities, county surveyors, etc. Additional fact sheets are proposed.
- ▶ Local Area Planner mailings - The Impacts Assessment Committee developed a survey to send to members of the Indiana Planner's Association, asking them what impacts wetlands have on their areas and how the IWCP project could help them. The committee also developed a package of information to send to planners, including model wetland ordinances and other materials.

The WAG and TAT will continue to have meetings through the end of the implementation phase of the IWCP project in April 1999.

- **Select and establish a Pilot Focus Area and develop a "model" for implementing comprehensive wetland conservation measures through local partnerships**

- ▶ Pilot selection - Several dozen focus areas (local area consortiums of people and organizations interested in wetland conservation) were nominated to be the IWCP Pilot Focus Area. Nominated focus areas were assessed by the TAT and WAG, and the *Friends of the Limberlost* was selected to be the pilot. Funding was provided for a pilot focus area coordinator (Ken Brunswick) for one year.
- ▶ Plan of Action - IWCP facilitators worked with the Limberlost Team to develop a comprehensive plan of action to guide local area wetland conservation actions. The Limberlost Team will continue to work with the TAT and WAG to implement this plan of action at the local level.

- ▶ Local area actions - The Limberlost Coordinator and Team have taken dozens of actions to pursue wetland conservation at the local level, including physical wetland restoration work, outreach to local landowners, meeting with dozens of school groups (elementary through college) and scout groups, communicating with the media about wetland functions and values, preparation of a study guide for teachers, development of interpretive and educational materials, coordination of a local recycling program, assistance for an aquatic insect and other scientific studies, information to thousands of visitors, development of detailed cover type maps for the Limberlost area, and application for grants to fund additional conservation work. The Limberlost Coordinator and Team will continue conducting these activities (and other activities identified in their Focus Area Plan) throughout the duration of the IWCP project and beyond.
 - ▶ *Focus Area Sourcebook and Directory* - IWCP facilitators are working with the Limberlost Coordinator and Team to develop this document which will be a "cookbook" for other potential and existing local area focus groups to follow in order to develop and/or enhance their wetland conservation efforts based on experiences of the Limberlost and other existing Indiana focus areas. The Sourcebook will be made available upon completion of the Pilot Focus Area project in May 1999.
 - ▶ Support for other focus areas - IWCP facilitators have sent four mailings to all Indiana focus areas that were nominated for the IWCP pilot focus area. These mailings contained dozens of materials that could be used to enhance local wetland conservation efforts, including technical information, outreach/education materials, contact lists of other local focus areas, sources of potential grant money for wetland conservation efforts, etc. Additional information and materials will continue to be sent to all focus areas as it becomes available. Focus area representatives have been asked to send any appropriate materials to project facilitators for duplication and distribution to all focus areas.
- **Initiate the development of a Wetland Assessment Method for evaluation and prioritization of wetlands**
 - ▶ Wetland Assessment Committee - This committee was formed to guide the initial development phase of a wetland assessment method for Indiana. The committee consists of members of the TAT and a research team from Taylor University led by Dr. Ed Squiers. This method will be used for prioritizing conservation, acquisition, regulation, and monitoring efforts to promote successful wetland conservation and restoration in Indiana.
 - ▶ Wetland Assessment Workshop - In February 1998, 50 professionals in wetland management attended a workshop in Indianapolis to discuss wetland assessment methods. Experts from across the eastern states gave presentations identifying methods currently being used by other midwestern states and the federal government. This information was used as a first step in developing an assessment method for Indiana. Proceedings of this workshop are being produced.

- ▶ Taylor University Study - Dr. Ed Squiers and his team at Taylor received a grant to develop a rapid assessment method for Indiana. This project is distinct from the IWCP project, but entails a tremendous amount of overlap. Dr. Squiers has attended TAT meetings, and the TAT has worked to make IWCP efforts dovetail with Taylor's project.
- **Improve the accessibility of existing wetlands information by developing outreach efforts**

Wetland conservation outreach has been accomplished through a number of avenues.

- ▶ Focus Area efforts - IWCP facilitators have sent a variety of information packages to the focus areas to help them communicate more effectively with people in their local areas. All outreach- and education-related materials that come to the IWCP facilitators is distributed to all focus areas.
- ▶ Pilot Focus Area - Ken Brunswick and his team at the Limberlost have conducted numerous tours, presentations, field days, media events, and other outreach efforts to people and groups throughout northeast Indiana and northwest Ohio.
- ▶ Impacts Assessment Committee - the committee has developed a fact sheet about mosquitoes and wetlands that it is preparing to distribute--along with other materials--to focus areas, city planners, and other interested parties. Additional fact sheets may be developed and distributed in the future.
- ▶ IWCP presentations - IWCP facilitators have made presentations about the project and wetlands conservation to many groups, including the Indiana Association of Highway Engineers, Indiana Chapter of The Wildlife Society, and others.
- ▶ Outreach Presentation Guide - The IWCP facilitators, working with the TAT and WAG, are currently developing an outreach guide. The contents of this document are still being determined, but it will probably contain the basic wetland information and presentation techniques that focus areas and others can use to inform local people about wetland functions and values and make informed decisions about wetland conservation issues.

Additional Benefits of the IWCP

Ongoing communication and information sharing have been an integral part of the IWCP process. This open exchange of ideas and information has been extremely valuable in myriad intangible ways, but it has also resulted in unexpected, tangible benefits that have been heartily welcomed by all those involved. A good example of this is the communication that took place between INDOT and county surveyors concerning potential mitigation sites. County surveyors often know of landowners in their counties who regularly lose crops on areas of their farms that flood. Many of these landowners would like to sell these lands, as they are unproductive.

On the other side of the coin, INDOT is often looking for sites such as these for potential mitigation sites for road projects. Seeing a potential win-win situation, INDOT sent a mailing to the 92 county surveyors in Indiana on July 2, 1998. The package included a map and listing of "Wetland Mitigation Projects with Outstanding Replacement Needs as of 5-11-98." INDOT has already received at least one 'lead' as a result of this communication that would not have occurred without the IWCP process, and the search is still ongoing.

Another example is the identification of stakeholders to be included in IDEM's process of developing wetland water quality standards for the *Triennial Review of State Water Quality Standards*. IDEM wanted participation in this review process from all the people and organizations in the state that had an interest in water quality. The IWCP Wetland Advisory Group was an obvious place to start. IDEM contacted all members of the WAG regarding the Triennial Review, and several members became actively involved with the external work group that was formed. Having a ready-made list of people to contact saved IDEM time and resources. Also, WAG members were already familiar with a variety of wetlands and water quality issues because of their involvement with the IWCP, and they had already established working relationships among themselves. They came to the Triennial review process as well-informed constituents.

Regulatory Issues

From the beginning of the IWCP planning process, the WAG and the TAT agreed to avoid tackling issues that would be extremely divisive or controversial, such as wetland regulations. The groups agreed instead to focus on areas of common ground, where understanding could be reached and progress made. However, the WAG and TAT also agreed that the issue of regulations should be brought up at every joint meeting, so participants could be kept abreast of current developments, share their experiences, voice their concerns, and get a better understanding of all sides of the issues. To date, the WAG and TAT have continually agreed to maintain this policy. An important benefit of this policy has been that a number of problems have been lessened or eliminated simply due to the increased understanding that WAG and TAT members have of the issues and concerns faced by their counterparts.

For more information about IWCP implementation efforts, please contact:

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